

# *Organizations, Paradigms, and People: The Challenge of KM Interventions*

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# The Multiple Paradigm Tool

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- Why think about paradigms --Burrell and Morgan's approach

*knowledge management*

- When to consider the tool
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# Why think about paradigms --Burrell and Morgan's Sociological Paradigm Model

- ❑ Author's objective: to relate theories of organization to their wider sociological context. As their research progressed, this objective expanded to embrace many aspects of philosophy and social theory in general.
- ❑ Their proposition is that social theory can usefully be conceived in terms of four key paradigms based upon different sets of metatheoretical assumptions about the nature of social science and the nature of society.
- ❑ The four paradigms are founded upon views of the social world, each generates its own distinctive analyses of social life.
- ❑ Authors concerned about the open hostility, ostrich-like indifference and generally poor-quality dialog and debate between researchers in related schools of thought – using the paradigm tool has the potential to expand communication.
- ❑ Organization studies called for a close examination of the assumptions upon which it is based with a view to seeing it in a new light.
- ❑ Although theorists and researchers are not always very explicit about the basic assumptions which inform their point of view, whether they are aware of it or not, they bring to their subject of study a frame of reference which reflects a whole series of assumptions about the nature of the social world and the way in which it might be investigated.
- ❑ The authors produced an analytical scheme for studying social theories in general: the two sets of assumptions defined four basic paradigms reflecting separate views of social reality.

# When to consider the Paradigm Tool

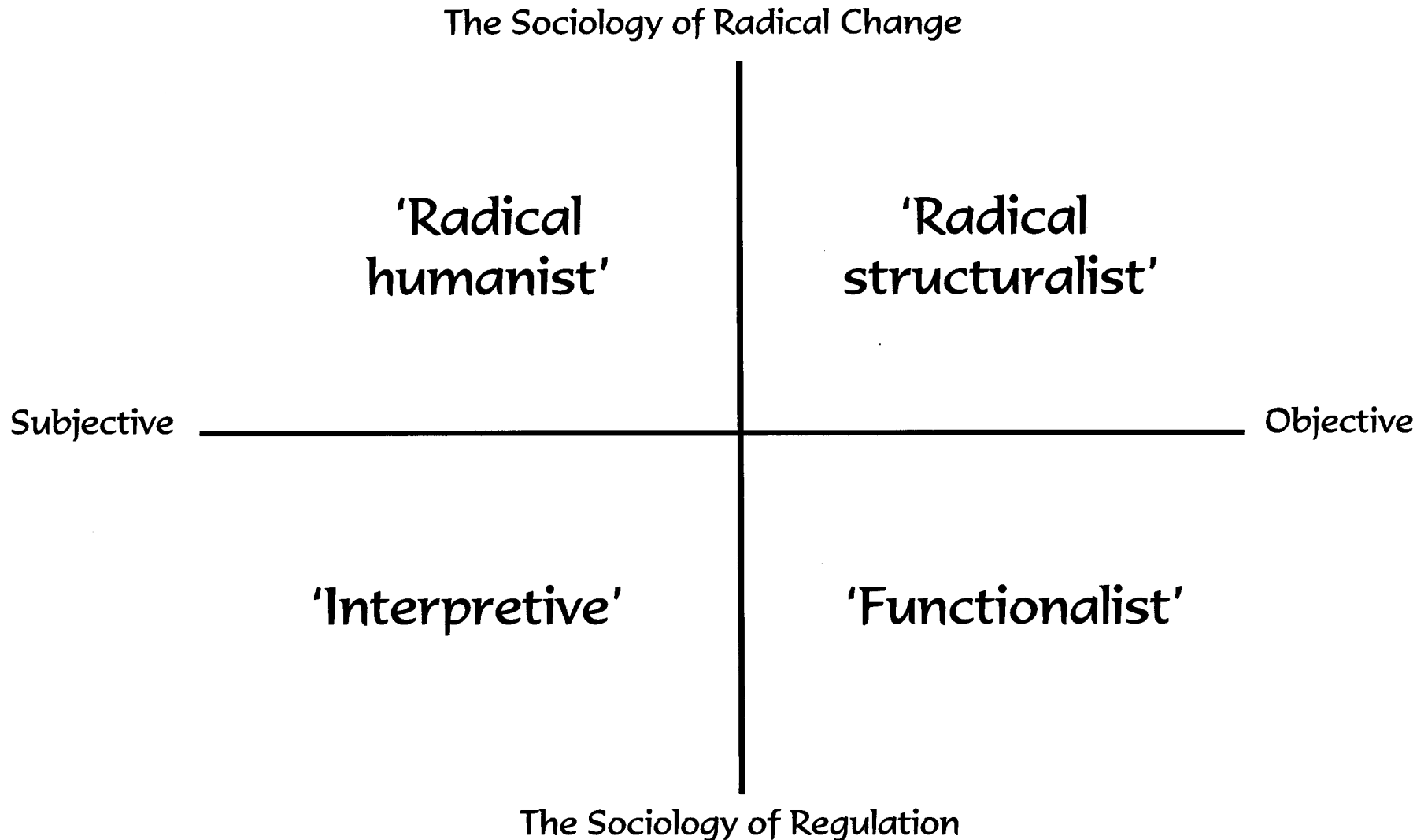
## When locating the research of others

- ❑ Consider each researcher having very different views of reality and the purpose of their research having different goals – paradigms look at the underlying mindset of the researcher and reveal where they are coming from.
- ❑ Looking at paradigms brings us face to face with the nature of assumptions which underwrite different approaches to social science. It cuts through the surface to what is fundamental in determining the way in which we see the world.
- ❑ In organization studies and other social science disciplines, a vast proportion of theory and research is located within the bounds of just one of the four paradigms. Furthermore, the adherents in that group take the theories for granted as right and self-evident. Looking through the lens of varying paradigms breaks this cycle.

## When locating your relationship to research

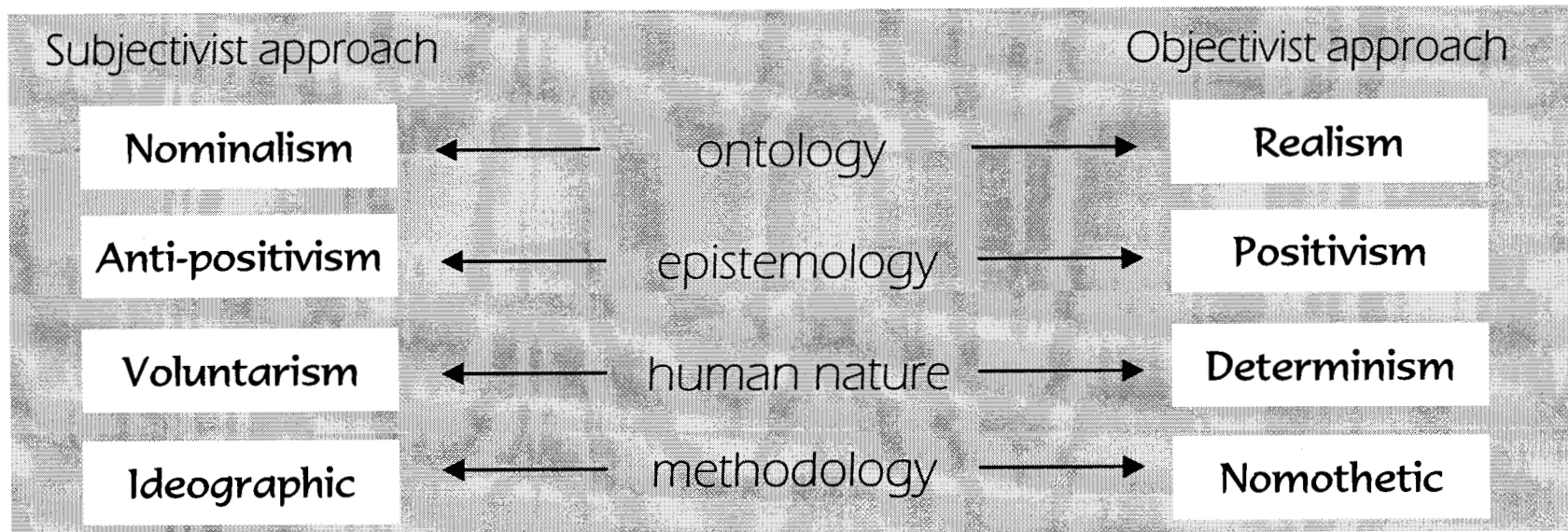
- ❑ In order to understand alternative points of view it is important that a scholar practitioner be fully aware of the assumptions upon which her own perspective is based.
- ❑ When generating social theory it is important to consider alternative ways of viewing the world and organizational phenomena.

# Four Paradigms: tool for the Analyzing Organizations



# Assumptions about the Nature of Social Science

## THE SUBJECTIVE-OBJECTIVE DIMENSION



### **Nominalism/realism the ontological debate**

Nominalist – There is no 'real' structure of the world, assumption that the social world external to individual cognition is made up of nothing more than names, concepts and labels which are used to structure reality.

Realist – The world exists independently of an individual's appreciation to it – the social world external to individual cognition is a real world made up of hard, tangible and immutable structures whether or not we perceive them, they still exist as empirical entities.

### **Anti-positivism/positivism the epistemological debate**

Positivist – Seeks to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements. In essence based upon the traditional approaches that dominate the natural sciences.

Anti-positivism – The social world is essentially relativistic and can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities which are studies.

### **Voluntarism/determinism the human nature debate**

Determinist – View which regards human nature and activities as being completely determined by the situation or environment in which they are located.

Voluntarist – Human nature is completely autonomous and free willed.

### **Ideographic/nomothetic theory the methodological debate**

Ideographic – Approach to social science is based on the view that one can only understand the social world by obtaining first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation. Stresses the importance of letting one's subject unfold its nature and characteristics during the process of investigation.

Nomothetic – Approach to social science emphasizes the importance of basing research upon systematic protocol and technique. Approach and methods employed in the natural sciences which focuses on the process of testing hypotheses in accordance with the canons of scientific rigor.

# Assumptions about the Nature of Society

## ORDER AND CONFLICT THEORIES OF SOCIETY

The 'order' or 'integrationist' view of society emphasizes:

**Stability  
Integration  
Functional co-ordination  
Consensus**

The 'conflict' or 'coercion' view of society emphasizes:

**Change  
Conflict  
Disintegration  
Coercion**

## REGULATION – RADICAL CHANGE DIMENSION

The sociology of 'regulation' is concerned with:

**The status quo  
Social order  
Consensus  
Social integration and cohesion  
Solidarity  
Need satisfaction  
Actuality**

The sociology of 'radical change' is concerned with:

**Radical change  
Structural conflict  
Modes of domination  
Contradiction  
Emancipation  
Deprivation  
Potentiality**

# Schools of Sociological and Organizational Theory

## The Sociology of Radical Change (Conflict)

- Emphasis on Radical Change – importance of overthrowing or transcending limitations of existing social arrangements.
- Change the world through a change in modes of cognition and consciousness.
- Anti-organization theory.
- French Existentialism, Anarchistic Individualism, Critical Theory.

### Radical humanist

- Committed to radical change, emancipation, and potentiality.
- Emphasizes structural conflict, modes of domination, contradiction, and deprivation.
- Older Marx as influenced by Darwinian theories of evolution and political economy.
- Radical organization theory.

### Radical structuralist

Subjective

Objective

### Interpretive

- Social world is an emergent social process created by concerned individuals – shared meaning.
- Concerned with issues of status quo, social order, consensus, social integration and cohesion, solidarity and actuality.
- Ethnomethodology and Phenomenological symbolic interactionism.

### Functionalist

- Rooted in sociological positivism
- Framework explains status quo, social order, consensus, social integration, solidarity, need satisfaction, and actuality.
- Concerned with the regulated order of objective facts.
- Interactionism and Social Action Theory

## The Sociology of Regulation (Order)



# Meaning and Metaphors in the Four Paradigms

## The Sociology of Radical Change (Conflict)

- Overthrowing or transcending the limitations of existing order
- Rebellious, release from constraints of societies values
- Critiques the status quo
- Realize ones full potential
- Anti-organization

- Realist, positivist, determinist, nomothetic
- Approach to science similar to the functionalist but have different values
- Committed to change, emancipation and potentiality
- Emphasises structural conflict
- Focus on structural relationships vs. consciousness
- Explanations of interrelationships, power

### Radical humanist

### Radical structuralist

Subjective

Objective

### Interpretive

### Functionalist

- Implicit, assuming is okay
- Spiritual nature of social world through experience
- Individuality, uniqueness
- Focus on the participant not the observer
- Multi-dimensional person
- Everyday life is miraculous
- Depths of consciousness
- World of human affairs is cohesive, integrated

- Regulative, classes, hierarchies, patriarchs
- Dominant, control
- Social order, equilibrium, authority figures
- Everyday life is predictable
- Right and wrong, good and evil
- Empirical, provable, testable, measurable
- Useful, thrifty, practical
- Compare human behavior to mechanical and biological processes
- Everyday life is predictable, explicit

## The Sociology of Regulation (Order)

# Possibilities and Conclusions

- What do the paradigms reveal about the recent theories being developed and put into practice in organizations.
- What is the Definition of Knowledge in the Four Paradigms
- What is the Meaning of Knowledge Management in the Four Paradigms